



Technician Commitment

Evaluating Impact through Self-Assessment & Future Action Planning

Organisation: The Earlham Institute
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To provide some context, please provide a brief profile of your organisation (up to 250 words):



The Earlham Institute is a hub of life science research, training and innovation, focused on understanding the natural world through the lens of genomics. Embracing the full breadth of life on Earth, our scientists specialise in developing and testing the latest tools and approaches needed to decode living systems and make predictions about biology.

Our mission is to unravel the scale and complexity of living systems so we can understand, benefit from and protect life on Earth. Our scientists and technical staff bring together multi-disciplinary expertise in the life sciences with data science, computational science and biotechnology.

We are helping to make sequencing an enabling technology for everyone involved in life science research. By exploiting the potential of high-throughput sequence generation, combined with a well-established model for data sharing, we are putting genomics at the forefront of modern life science research. Currently, the Institute is contributing to the UK based 'Darwin Tree of Life' project which is part of a global project to sequence the genome of every known living organism on earth.

The Earlham Institute sits within parkland (referred to as the Norwich Research Park [NRP]), at the western edge of Norwich, together with:

- University of East Anglia (UEA);
- John Innes Centre (JIC);
- Quadram Institute Bioscience (QIB);
- The Sainsbury Laboratory (TSL) and
- Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (NNUH)

This enables close inter-institutional collaboration.

Central services (HR, Finance, Facilities, IT, Training and Development) are operated across the NRP by the Norwich Bioscience Institute Partnership (NBIP). Staff employed by the NBIP are not included in the data presented here.

Please tell us how your organisation defines its technicians:

Technical science staff are designated as Research Assistants within the HR system. Their range of technical skills across the Institute are vital to its success. The staff we believe will benefit most directly from our participation in the Technician Commitment are:

Staff with scientific-technical skills who work in the following teams:

- **Genomics Pipelines** This group runs the high-throughput genomics laboratories at EI. Primarily, the group supports the National Capability in Genomics and Single Cell (NCGSC) which provides access to genomics platforms to the UK biosciences community.
- **Biofoundry** The Biofoundry provides a platform to undertake large-scale projects. It supports high through-put engineering of biological systems, promotes the use of automation and advances bioscience research and innovation in the UK.

Other staff with a range of specialist and technical skills, who we believe will benefit from our work on the Technician Commitment are employed in:

- Business Development and Innovation
- Business Support
- Communications
- Directorate
- Research Faculty Office

We include all the staff groups mentioned above in our Technician Commitment work and intend them to be covered by our plan. We use the designation 'PTO' (professional, technical and operational) staff in our submission and plan to indicate the total of these staff categories.

We also welcome research staff and students at any events related to the Technician Commitment, as they will either be responsible for, or work with PTO staff, or may decide to follow a technical career in the future.

How many technicians are there in your organisation? Please provide some information on where they are based and/or how they are structured (in terms of subject/discipline/department):

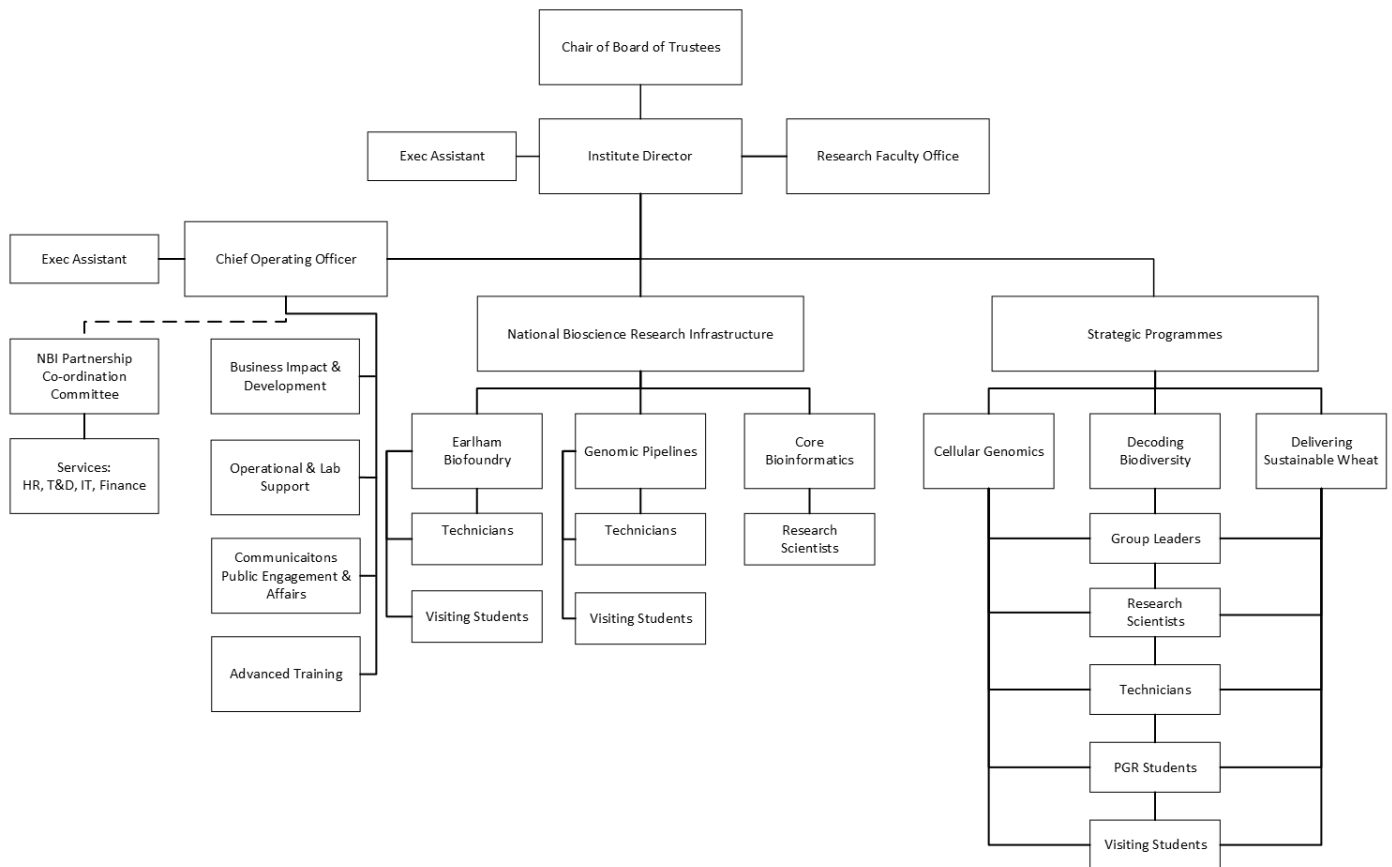
Professional Technical and Operational (PTO) Staff	F	M	Total
Chief Operating Officer	1		1
Head of Department*	3	2	5
Laboratory Manager		1	1
Research Assistant	12	4	16
EA/Administrator	2		2
Programme/Project Manager	3	2	5
Senior Support Specialist	7	3	10
Support Specialist	9	2	11
Total PTO staff:	37	14	51
All other staff (Research)	18	32	50
PTO and Research Staff Total	55	46	101
% PTO Staff within gender pool**	67.3	30.4	50.5

*Departments: Research Faculty Office, Genomic Pipelines, Communications, Business Development & Impact, Advanced Training

**the percentages in the bottom row indicate 67.3% of all women and 30.4% of all men employed at EI are in PTO roles.

Data on 31 August 2023

The table above shows recent data of our professional, technical and support staff by the job category shown on the HR system. Technical staff are included under Research Assistant.



Organogram showing key teams within the structure of Earlham Institute.

The table and organogram show how many of our staff we count as covered by the Technician Commitment and in which part of the organisation they can be found. Staff whose roles are purely technical are found in the areas with boxes marked as ‘Technician’, although the HR system records them as ‘Research Assistant’, as shown in the table.

Please provide details of initiatives/programmes/activities that were already in place for the technical community within your organisation prior to becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment:

Professional, Technical and Operational staff have always been supported by the same range of initiatives as other staff, including appraisal (annually), and opportunities to access general training, or to request more specialist training via their line managers. However, there were no activities or events held solely for, or to highlight, PTO careers.

Several actions in our Athena Swan Bronze Action Plan (ASBAP) aim to facilitate greater development of PTO staff. Where an action in our Technician Commitment Action Plan links to, or is an extension of an action in our ASBAP, the cross-reference number to our Athena Swan plan is shown.

The Technician Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technical staff across higher education and research. Please tell us of any initiatives your organisation has put in place to address these themes since becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment:

19 Jan 2023 Technician Commitment Launch Event including presentations by Clare Stevenson and Penny Hundleby, both of JIC. The event included an idea-generating workshop from which our Action Plan is derived.

27 Feb 2023	A Technician Commitment Steering Group was established following an open call for members. Those staff who put themselves forward but were not selected were made members of a virtual feedback group and invited to comment on the draft action plan (12 July 2023).
March 2023	An intranet page about the Technician Commitment was established with links to information, opportunities and resources for staff.
22 May 2023	Professional Registration Event, including a talk by Laurence Deakin-Hall and a follow-up workshop session.
Sept 2023	A survey was conducted to determine the overall appetite across the Norwich Bioscience Institutes for undertaking professional registration. This helped us determine when we should arrange a further, more detailed workshop with Laurence Deakin-Hall. Of 61 responses received, 23 were definitely interested in attending such a workshop and a further 22 indicated they might be. The optimum timescale indicated was within the next six months. 21 respondents were from EI.

Regular updates were presented via the Institute's 'Town Hall' style staff meeting since Nov 2022 (announcing EI formally signing up), by the Technician Commitment Lead, to keep all staff abreast of developments and events. These meetings are now 'in-person' (having been held virtually during the pandemic), but also recorded, so all staff have the opportunity to catch-up if they are unable to attend the meeting on the day itself.

The Technician Commitment Lead became a member of the Research Institute Technician Group (RITG) (May 2023), a group of peer Research Institutes within the TC scheme, which has helped steer the development of EI's Technician Commitment work.

EI's TC Lead helped to organise the 2023 Accessible Science conference, which was NBI-wide for the first time on 10th October 2023 and was supported by a successful joint bid from the TC Collaboration Fund. The Accessible Science conference was a day of talks from EI, JIC, QIB and TSL students, postdocs, research leaders and technicians (two from EI – 1M, 1F), delivered in a way that was accessible to a non-expert audience. The conference could be attended in person or online and was advertised widely on social media and by email. Many talks were focussed on the non-typical career paths of the speakers and were very well received by the audience of NBI staff and students and young people from schools and colleges across East Anglia, the UK and abroad. The EI talks were a career development opportunity for the staff who volunteered as well as serving to promote EI's work.

Please provide a 24-month action plan, detailing future plans to ensure your organisations addresses the themes of the Technician Commitment and details of how impact will be evidenced: (this may be detailed here or attached to this document as an appendix):

Please see Plan, attached as Appendix.

We are mindful of the challenges highlighted in the MI Talent Commission report:

([FrontierEconomicValueCommissionreport-web.pdf](#)) and our action plan aims to start to address these issues at EI.

Please evidence how the 'technician voice' was present in the development and formation of the institutional action plan:

- At the launch event, we hosted talks by Clare Stevenson and Penny Hundleby (both of JIC), with a Q & A opportunity for staff. This was followed by a networking/idea-generating workshop which produced over sixty ideas. These ideas were transcribed and brought to our Technician Commitment Steering Group meetings from which the plan was developed.

- Staff were asked to volunteer to become a member of the steering group. From the volunteers five staff were selected from different teams/grades/genders at EI. A further eleven staff had volunteered and formed a 'virtual feedback group' who received copies of the draft plan to comment on.
- A Teams space was set up (after the Launch Event) for staff to comment on activities and developments and contact the Steering Group.
- An anonymous on-line comment space was established and promoted via EI-All.
- Information and opportunities were posted onto the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Accessibility) Noticeboard in the Institute's Atrium. The on-line anonymous comment space was also promoted here to encourage feedback.
- Feedback was encouraged by the Technician Commitment Lead at each update to staff in our EI-All meetings (held approximately every two months).

Please confirm that your Technician Commitment status and action plan is published on your organisation's website and provide the relevant URL here:

[Inclusivity, diversity, equality and accessibility at EI | Earlham Institute](#)

Signed ~~Fiona Fraser~~ (Technician Commitment Nominated Institutional Lead)

Date: 30/11/2023

Signed ~~Neil Hall~~ (Technician Commitment Signatory – Leader of Institution)

Date: 06/12/2023